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ROUTLEDGE CURZON ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAMIC RELIGION

Entries for Theology: Theologians, Thinkers

(35 entries)

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(initials HPG)

'Abd al-Jabbar (c. AD 935-1025)

The last great thinker of the school of the Mu'tazila in the classical period of Islamic thought. He was born in western Iran and went to study in Basra, where he changed his allegiance from the Ash'ari school to the Mu'tazila, and he then moved to Baghdad. In 978 he was appointed chief *qadi* (judge) of the city of Rayy (near modern Tehran), where he spent most of the rest of his life. His largest work the *Kitab al-Mughni* (literally 'The Book which makes sufficient') was re-discovered in Yemen in 1950, and his shorter one-volume summary of the teachings of the Mu'tazila, the *Sharh al-Usul al-Khamsa* (Exposition of the Five Principles: the unity of God; His justice; the 'promise and threat' (in the afterlife); the intermediate position (as outlined earlier by Wasil ibn 'Ata'); and 'commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong') is an accessible introduction to the ideas of the school.

References: Peters, J.R.T.M., *God's Created Speech: a Study of the Speculative Theology of the Mu'tazilite Qadi'l-Qudat Abu'l-Hasan 'Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Hamadani*, Leiden: Brill, 1976; Hourani, G.F., *Islamic Rationalism: the Ethics of 'Abd al-Jabbar*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971; Martin, R.C., Woodward, M.R., and Atmaja, D.S., *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu'tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol*, Oxford: Oneworld, 1997, Part One. (HPG)

'Abduh, Muhammad (AD 1849-1905)

Born in Egypt and educated at al-Azhar, the leading institution of Islamic learning in that country, 'Abduh became a disciple of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani during the period that he was in Egypt in the 1870's. When the British occupied Egypt in 1882 'Abduh found himself first in prison and then in exile, joining al-Afghani in Paris. In 1885, however, he moved to Beirut, where he delivered some lectures on theology which became the basis for his most important work the *Risalat al-Tawhid* (The Theology (literally 'Letter') of Unity). In 1888 he returned to Egypt, having come to a pragmatic acceptance of the reality of British rule, and during the remaining years of his life he progressed through the legal and religious institutions of Egypt, becoming a member of the Council of al-Azhar in 1895 and Chief Mufti (Legal Official) in 1899. He also began the publication of a radically new type of commentary on the Qur'an, which appeared in a journal, *al-Manar* (literally 'The Lighthouse'), and which attempted to relate the message of the scripture directly to contemporary issues. Like al-Afghani 'Abduh was concerned about defending the world of Islam from European encroachment and Islam itself from European influences, and he therefore sought to purify and revive Islamic practice, but in contrast to al-Afghani he laid far less stress on political action and far more on educational and social reform, and he was readier to reformulate traditional Islamic doctrine in the light of modern thought.

References: Kedourie, E., *Afghani and Abduh: an Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, London: Frank Cass, 1966; Badawi, M.A.Z., *The Reformers of Egypt*, London: Croom Helm, 1978, Chapter Two; Kerr, M.H., *Islamic Reform: the Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966; 'Abduh, M., (tr. I. Musa'ad and K. Cragg), *The Theology of Unity*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966.
(HPG)

Abu'l-Hudhayl al-Allaf (c. AD 750-c.840)

One of the outstanding thinkers of the school of thought known as the Mu'tazila. Born in Basra, he spent his formative years there, probably moving to Baghdad around 818 and then dying there some twenty years later. None of his works survive, but based on their titles and the summaries of his views produced by others he argued for the strict unity and utter transcendence of God, so that He is utterly unlike His creatures; for human free will, since God is not the author of evil actions; and for the createdness of the Qur'an. He gathered a number of disciples around him, especially in Baghdad, where he chaired a number of religious discussions at the court of the caliph al-Ma'mun, and he was also responsible for a number of polemical works against other religious traditions.

References: Watt, W.M., *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973 and Oxford: Oneworld, 1998, Chapter Eight; Caspar, R., *A Historical Introduction to Islamic Theology*, Rome: Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 1998, Chapter Seven. (HPG)

Al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din (AD 1839-1897)

The details of al-Afghani's early life are rather opaque in that although he claimed to have been born in Afghanistan (hence his title, al-Afghani) he was almost certainly born in Iran, and thus came from a Shi'i background. He first appears on the public stage in Afghanistan, however, as an adviser to the king, whom he sought to warn against British expansionist ambitions. He was expelled, however, in 1868, and over the next few years he spent time in Istanbul, in Cairo, in India, in Paris, in Iran, in Russia, in Iran once again, and then finally in Istanbul, where he died. In each of these places he caused controversy for either his political or his religious views (or both), and this was the reason for his often having to move from one place to another. In politics he sought to arouse both rulers and people in the Muslim world to the dangers of European, and especially British, expansion, and to call the Muslim world to unite under the banner of Islam in order to resist this process. This unity, he suggested, this 'pan-Islam', should not only transcend existing political boundaries but also include both Sunni and Shi'i Muslims. With respect to his religious views al-Afghani called for a return to the two earliest sources of religious guidance, the Qur'an and the Hadith, and the proper practice of Islam on this basis, he suggested, would bring about the revival of both the faith of Islam and the political fortunes of its adherents. Islam was also, in his view, a supremely modern and rational religion, and in sharp contrast to Sayyid Ahmad Khan, against whom he wrote strongly while he was in India, it did not need to be reformulated in order to make it so; it was only necessary to interpret the two earliest sources properly.

References: Keddie, N.R., *Sayyid Jamal al-Din "al-Afghani": a Political Biography*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972; idem., *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Religious and Political Writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din "al-Afghani"*, 2nd ed., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983; Kedourie, E., *Afghani and*

Abduh: an Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam, London: Frank Cass, 1966; Badawi, M.A.Z., *The Reformers of Egypt*, London: Croom Helm, 1978, Chapter One. (HPG)

Amin, Ahmad (AD 1886-1954)

The author of a noted work of autobiography in the context of Egypt in the first half of the twentieth century, which includes a memorable description of his feelings on being enrolled as a student in al-Azhar, the oldest institution of traditional Islamic learning in the world, and having to put on a turban: "I became prematurely old." He went on to be Professor of Arabic Literature in Cairo University from 1936-1946, and to produce a three-volume history of the Islamic World until the year 1000 which was the first such work in Arabic to make use of critical method.

Reference: Amin, A., *My Life*, (tr. I.J. Boullata), Leiden: Brill, 1968. (HPG)

Amin, Qasim (AD 1863-1908)

Born in Alexandria, Amin studied law in Cairo and then Paris, and there, under the influence of Muhammad 'Abduh, he became convinced that the main reason for the relative backwardness of Muslim societies compared with Europe was simply ignorance, which began in the family. The main solution, he therefore suggested, was to raise the living conditions and educational attainments of women, by ending their seclusion and veiling, declaring polygamy and unilateral divorce to be illegal, and giving women the opportunity to work, all of which, he insisted, was not contrary to Islamic Law but rather a more correct interpretation of it.

Reference: Amin, Q., *The Liberation of Women and The New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, (tr. S.S. Peterson), Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000. (HPG)

Antun, Farah (AD 1874-1922)

A Lebanese journalist, born into the Greek Orthodox Christian community, who spent a number of years in New York and was also well-versed in the French intellectual tradition, with a particular partiality for the ideas of Ernest Renan, whose *Life of Jesus* he translated into Arabic. In 1903 he published (in Arabic) a study of the Islamic philosopher Ibn Rushd which also reflected Renan's influence as in it Antun argued that Ibn Rushd's ideas represented reason, science and civilization, and that the European model of equality between religions and the development of a secular state was the way forward for Middle Eastern societies. Antun's former friend, Muhammad 'Abduh, wrote a strong riposte to his views.

Reference: Hourani, A.H., *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, Chapter Ten. (HPG)

Al-Ash`ari (c. AD 873-935)

The founding father of one of the main schools of thought in Islamic theology, which still exists today, along with that of al-Maturidi. Al-Ash`ari was born in Basra and studied there in the school of the Mu`tazila. Around 912, however, he claims to have had a series of dreams during the month of fasting, Ramadan, in which he saw the Prophet Muhammad, who commanded him firstly to adhere to Tradition, which al-Ash`ari at first understood to be a command to abandon *kalam* (rational theology); later, however, the Prophet told him not to abandon *Kalam*, and this al-Ash`ari came to understand as being a call to defend Tradition but using the methods of *kalam*. Whatever the nature of these experiences they accurately describe his intellectual pilgrimage as after 912 he adopted the views of the Traditionists with reference to such things as the nature of God's attributes and of the Qur'an even if he sought to continue to use *kalam*-style arguments to defend these positions. He thus came to occupy a kind of intermediate position between the Mu`tazila on the one hand and the Traditionists on the other. He also further developed the idea of *kasb* (acquisition) first proposed by Dirar ibn Amr whereby human actions were ultimately created by God but human beings acquired the responsibility for them.

References: Watt, W.M., *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973 and Oxford: Oneworld, 1998, Chapter Ten; Caspar, R., *A Historical Introduction to Islamic Theology*, Rome: Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 1998, Chapter Eight; McCarthy, R.J., (ed.), *The Theology of al-Ash'ari*, Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953. (HPG)

Al-Baqillani (?-AD 1013)

A significant theologian in the Ash'ari school of Islamic theology, and its first systematiser after al-Ash'ari himself. He was born and educated in Basra and when he was about thirty he was summoned to Shiraz in Iran to take part in theological discussions at the court of the Shi'i ruler of the day, of the Buyid dynasty. In 982 he took part in a diplomatic mission to the Byzantine Empire, and the rest of his life was then spent in Baghdad. His most important work, the *Kitab al-Tamhid* (literally 'The Book of Introduction') is the earliest example of a complete work of systematic Islamic theology, which includes discussion of the existence and names of God, refutation of other religions, and refutation of unorthodox groups within the Islamic community. He also wrote a classic work on the *I'jaz* (inimitability) of the Qur'an.

References: Watt, W.M., *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 2nd ed., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985, Chapter Twelve; McCarthy, R.J., (ed.), *Kitab al-Tamhid*, Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1957; Haddad, W.Z., 'A Tenth-Century Speculative Theologian's Refutation of the Basic Doctrines of Christianity: al-Baqillani (d. A.D. 1013)' in Haddad, Y.Y., and Haddad, W.Z., (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995, pp. 82-94; Von Grunebaum, G.E., *A Tenth-Century Document of Arabic Literary Theory and Criticism: the Sections on Poetry of al-Baqillani's I'jaz al-Qur'an*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950. (HPG)

Barelwi, Ahmad (AD 1786-1831)

Indian reformer and activist. In his early years Barelwi was a disciple of 'Abd al-'Aziz, the son and successor of the reformist thinker Shah Waliullah, but in his later years, due largely to changing political circumstances in India, his thought moved in a more conservative and activist direction. He worked firstly to organise a *jihad* (military struggle) against the Sikhs, against whom he enjoyed some success but by whom he was in the end defeated and killed, as a result of which he was given the title *shahid* (martyr) by some of his followers; and secondly to oppose the expanding influence of the British. This theme was taken up by some of his followers after his death, and became one of the forces behind the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

References: Ahmad, A., *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964, Chapter Nine; Metcalf, B.D., *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, Chapter Two. (HPG)

Dirar ibn Amr (c. AD 730-800 or 820)

Little is known about his life beyond the fact that he spent most of his life in Basra in Iraq, but he made a huge contribution to the development of Islamic thought, partly as a result of the fact that he composed a book on the Aristotelian notion of substances and accidents, one of the first demonstrations of Muslim knowledge of this material as a result of its translation into Arabic in this period, and partly because of the richness of his own thought. He supported the use of rational arguments in theology, like the Mu'tazila, but his own conclusions tended to differ from those of the Mu'tazila so that, for example, he argued that all human actions are determined by God. Human beings thus do not have free will, even if Dirar argued that humans did acquire responsibility for their actions, the idea of *kasb* (acquisition), an idea which was later taken up and developed by al-Ash'ari.

References: Watt, W.M., *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973 and Oxford: Oneworld, 1998, Chapters Seven and Eight; Caspar, R., *A Historical Introduction to Islamic Theology*, Rome: Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 1998, Chapter Seven. (HPG)

Ghaylan al-Dimashqi (?-c. AD 737)

One of the early pioneers in Islamic Theology (*kalam*) of the idea that human beings have free will, rather than all their actions being determined by God. He was the son of a freed slave of the third caliph, 'Uthman, and served in the administration of the Umayyad caliphs in Damascus. His views on free will, however, made him unpopular with his rulers, not least because a belief in free will suggested that Umayyad rule had not been predestined by God and could therefore be challenged, and after a number of disputes and a period in exile in Armenia he was executed by the caliph Hisham.

References: Watt, W.M., *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973 and Oxford: Oneworld, 1998, Chapter Four; Caspar, R., *A Historical Introduction to Islamic Theology*, Rome: Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 1998, Chapter Six. (HPG)

Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid (AD 1058-1111)

One of the greatest thinkers of medieval Islam, and also one of the most accessible on account of the availability of his autobiography, in which he outlines the different stages of his intellectual search for the truth, through theology, then philosophy, Shi'i Islam and then finally Sufism. Like his teacher al-Juwayni, he eventually concluded that truth was not perceived by intellectual apprehension but rather by immediate experience and walking in the way of the mystics. Born in Tus, in north-eastern Iran, he studied there and in Nishapur before he was called to Baghdad to teach in the Nizamiyya Academy, one of the leading intellectual institutions of the day, but while there he seems to have had some kind of nervous breakdown, as a result of which he left his post and spent a decade travelling around the Middle East, including to Mecca and Medina, and living as a poor Sufi. He was recalled to teaching in 1105, however, but at the time of his death he was once again living in Tus, in a Sufi community. Apart from his autobiography many of his works are still available, perhaps the two most important being the *Tahafut al-Falasifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), in which he suggests that Neoplatonic Islamic philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina are unbelievers because of their rejection of the ideas of creation, the resurrection of the body, and God's knowledge of specific individuals and actions, and the *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), in which he outlines his programme for the renewal of the Muslim community.

References: Watt, W.M., *Muslim Intellectual: a Study of al-Ghazali*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963; Moosa, E., *Al-Ghazali of Tus: His Life and Thought*, Oxford: Oneworld, forthcoming; Watt, W.M., *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali*, Oxford: Oneworld, 1994; McCarthy, R.J., (ed.), *Deliverance from Error*, Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2001; Marmura, M.E., (ed.), *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1997; Jackson, S.A., (ed.),

On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; Burrell, D.B., (ed.), *Al-Ghazali: the Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*, Cambridge; Islamic Texts Society, 1992. (The Islamic Texts Society has also published English translations of a number of volumes of al-Ghazali's *magnum opus*, the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.) (HPG)

Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, Muhammad (AD 1703-1792)

Hanbali preacher and revivalist in Arabia. Born in al-'Unayna, an oasis in Najd, the central area of Arabia, he studied the Hanbali works of Ibn Qudama with his father and then, following a visit to Mecca, he spent time in Medina, where he was influenced by the ideas of Ibn Taimiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. He then spent some time in Basra, returning to Najd in 1739. There, in 1744, he entered into an alliance with the local ruler, Muhammad ibn Su'ud, whereby Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab would provide spiritual guidance and Ibn Su'ud would provide the political and military means to see it implemented. Over the next twenty years or so 'Abd al-Wahhab's message and Ibn Su'ud's political power were together established over much of Central Arabia and this process continued after Ibn Su'ud's death in 1765 and that of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab in 1792. The message which he preached was one of strict monotheism, with no intermediaries between God and humanity, and this led to harsh condemnations of Sufism and of many of the religious practices widely current in Arabia, which were described as *shirk* (idolatry). Arabia was thus reckoned still to be in a state of *jahiliyya* (spiritual ignorance), from which it needed to be purged. The alliance of these two figures, after a number of vicissitudes in the nineteenth century, provided the foundations of the modern state of Su'udi Arabia, and also the intellectual roots of much revivalist thought across the whole of the Islamic world.

References: Vassiliev, A., *The History of Saudi Arabia*, London: Saqi Books, 2000, Part One; al-Yassini, A., *Religion and State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1985, Part One; Algar, H., *Wahhabism: a Critical Essay*, Oneonta (New York): Islamic Publications International, 2002; al-Faruqi, I.R., (ed.), *The Kitab al-Tawhid of Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab*, Beirut and Damascus: Holy Koran Publishing House, 1979. (HPG)

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (AD 1292-1350)

Theologian and legal scholar of the Hanbali school. Born in Damascus, he became the most famous follower of Ibn Taymiyya, whose ideas he absorbed and then helped to disseminate. He was less confrontational in style than his teacher, however, and so although he was imprisoned for two years, from 1326 to 1328, at the same time as Ibn Taymiyya, he was released when his master died. H. Laoust described him as 'much less of a polemicist than his master and much more a preacher', so that although he was concerned about most of the same issues he campaigned against them with much less animus. In particular he was less antagonistic towards Sufism. A recent work has also made more widely-known his expertise in the field of medicine.

References: Watt, W.M., *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 2nd ed., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985, Chapter Eighteen; Johnstone, P., (ed.), *The Medicine of the Prophet*, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1998. (HPG)

Ibn Qudama (AD 1147-1223)

A scholar of the Hanbali school, who was critical of the whole tradition of *kalam* (rational theology) in Islam. He was born near Jerusalem, and as a result of the disruption caused by the Crusaders' conquest of that city he and his family moved when he was about ten to Damascus, where he studied Qur'an and Hadith (Tradition). He visited Baghdad on several occasions, and also Mecca, and he took part in the expedition led by Saladin to reconquer Jerusalem in 1187, but he spent most of his life in Damascus, and it was there that he died. He wrote a number of works on jurisprudence, and in his *Tahrim al-Nazar fi Kutub Ahl al-Kalam* (Prohibition of the Study of the Books of the Theologians) he condemns not only the Mu'tazila but also the theologians of the Ash'ari school.

Reference: Makdisi, G., (ed.), *Ibn Qudama's Censure of Speculative Theology*, London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, 1962. (HPG)

Ibn Taymiyya (AD 1263-1328)

Important thinker of the Hanbali school, whose ideas were hugely influential on modern revivalist movements in Islam such as those of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. He was born in Harran in Syria, and was educated in Damascus in the fields of law and theology. When he became a teacher himself, however, he taught the exegesis of the Qur'an. A crucial turning-point in his life came in 1292 when, during the pilgrimage to Mecca, he became aware of a number of practices, such as visiting the tomb of Muhammad, which were new, and which he became convinced were unlawful innovations. For the rest of his life he therefore devoted himself to the task of seeking to purify Islamic practice, and he therefore entered into controversy with those who were responsible for this state of affairs, including philosophers, theologians, Shi'is, Sufis who countenanced the possibility of human beings being united with God, and Christians, all of whom he attacked with both his tongue and his pen. He was imprisoned on five occasions during the last years of his life, and it was there that he died in 1328, having been deprived even of paper and ink as a desperate measure by the authorities to prevent the dissemination of his views. The positive points in his opinions included strict monotheism, with no possibility of intermediaries between God and human beings; the authority of only the Qur'an and the Hadith (Tradition), and not the consensus (*ijma'*) of the community; and the obligation of legitimate Islamic rulers to enforce Islamic Law (the Shari'a).

References: Memon, M.U., *Ibn Taimiyya's Struggle Against Popular Religion*, The Hague: Mouton, 1976; Hallaq, W.B., *Ibn Taimiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; Michel, T., *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, Delmar (New York): Caravan Books, 1984; Makari, V.E., *Ibn Taimiyya's Ethics: the Social Factor*, Chico (California): Scholars Press, 1983; Lambton, A.K.S., *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 1981, Chapter Nine; Khan, Q., *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah*, Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1983; Sivan, E., *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, 2nd ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. (HPG)

Ibn Tumart (c. AD 1070-1130)

Self-proclaimed Mahdi (literally 'Guided One' or Deliverer) who made a considerable impact on the Western end of the Islamic world. He was born in Morocco, and after a year of study in Cordoba around 1106 he travelled to Egypt, Arabia and Iraq, where he seems to have developed a vision of Islamic reform in the West. When he returned, therefore, around 1117, he began to preach the importance of the proper observation of Islamic practice, a message which provoked considerable opposition in some places. He did win some support, however, and a meeting with one supporter, 'Abd al-Mu'min, proved particularly significant for the future. In 1121, after a period of meditation in a cave, he proclaimed himself the Mahdi and was at once recognised as such by ten followers. During the remaining years of his life he established control over a small area in the south of Morocco, but after his death, under the leadership of 'Abd al-Mu'min, the Almohad state (literally '*al-muwahiddun*', strict upholders of the unity of God) seized control of the whole of Muslim North Africa and Spain. The main distinctive feature of Ibn Tumart's thought was his strict monotheism, which led him to describe his opponents as anthropomorphists, against whom *jihad* (military struggle) was therefore legitimate.

References: Watt, W.M., *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 2nd ed., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985, Chapter Fifteen; Macdonald, D.B., *The Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, New York: Russell and Russell, 1903, Part III, Chapter Five; Abun-Nasr, J.M., *A History of the Maghreb in the Islamic period*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 87-103. (HPG)

Ilyas, Muhammad (AD 1885-1944)

The founder of probably the most influential, in numerical terms, Islamic revivalist movement of the twentieth century. Muhammad Ilyas was trained at the main Sunni institution of learning in South Asia, the Deoband Seminary, and as a young man he became concerned about both the persistence of pre-Islamic (i.e. Hindu) practices among many of the rural Muslims of North India and the failure of the traditional Islamic schools, to address, yet alone resolve, this issue. From his base at Nizamuddin in Delhi he therefore began to send out Muslim teachers to educate Muslims in the proper practice of their faith in the context of their own communities. The group he established to further this approach, the Tablighi Jama'at (literally 'Preaching Movement') has become hugely influential across the Muslim world and among diaspora communities, and its annual conferences in Pakistan have an attendance of over a million people. The message spread involves six simple points: knowing and reciting the Islamic declaration of faith; saying *salat* (prayers) correctly; learning basic Islamic knowledge and performing *dhikr* (mentioning the names of God), if possible communally; paying respect and being polite to fellow Muslims; practising honesty and sincerity (*ikhlas*); and spending time away from worldly pursuits in order to undertake preaching tours to spread this message. It is this last practice which explains the enormous success of the movement, and the Sufi elements of its practice, together with its avoidance of political argument, have made it hugely influential as an example of what is sometimes called "Islam from below".

References: Haq, M.A., *The Faith Movement of Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972; Nadwi, A.H.A., *Life and Mission of Maulana Mohammad Ilyas*, Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1983; Metcalf, B.D., "'Remaking Ourselves': Islamic Self-Fashioning in a Global Movement of Spiritual Renewal' in Marty, M.E., and Appleby, R.S.,

(eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*, Chicaglo: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 706-725; Sikand, Y., *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at (1920-2000): a Cross-Country Comparative Study*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2002. (HPG)

Iqbal, Muhammad (AD 1875-1938)

The most sophisticated Muslim intellectual in South Asia in the first half of the twentieth century. Born in Sialkot (in what is now Pakistan) Iqbal studied in Cambridge, Heidelberg and Munich, where he completed his doctorate in 1908 under the title *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*. This reflected his interests in both philosophy and literature, especially poetry, and he later came to be regarded as the greatest Urdu poet of the twentieth century. In theology he followed in the reformist tradition of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, advocating the reformulation of traditional Islamic teachings, most notably in his lectures on *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, which have been described as 'speculative modernism' (M. Ruthven). By profession he was a lawyer and in the debates between the two World Wars about how British India should develop after independence from Britain at some future date he became a vigorous supporter of the idea of a separate state for Muslims, to be called Pakistan, which he envisaged as being both a democratic and a socialist state.

References: Schimmel, A., *Gabriel's Wing: a Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, Leiden: Brill, 1963; Malik, H., (ed.), *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1971; Raschid, M.S., *Iqbal's Concept of God*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1986; Iqbal, M., *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, first published in London in 1934 and reprinted many times, e.g. Lahore: Ashraf, 1954. (HPG)

Al-Jabarti (AD 1754-1825)

Historian of early modern Egypt, whose main chronicle covers the years 1688 to 1821. Particularly interesting for the study of the relationship between the world of Islam and the West, however, are the sections of his works which recount the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798, the first direct attack by a European country on a central region of the Islamic world in modern times. From his comments it is clear that al-Jabarti had a combination of admiration and scorn for the French, and his account of the interaction between representatives of the two cultures in Cairo still makes fascinating reading.

Reference: Moreh, S., (ed.), *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the French Occupation, 1798*, Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1993. (HPG)

Jahm ibn Safwan (?- AD 746)

One of the most significant theological thinkers at the end of the Umayyad period. He lived in Khurasan, at the eastern end of the Islamic world, and was the intellectual force behind a rebellion against Umayyad rule in that part of the world. As a result of this he was captured and executed, for a combination of rebellion and unbelief. His theology stressed the absolute unity of God, so that God has no attributes, and the Qur'an has not always existed but is rather created; that human beings may have the impression of free will but ultimately all human actions are created by God; and that ultimately God alone exists, so that at the end of the world heaven and hell will cease to exist and, as before creation, only God will continue to exist. Qur'anic references to God's attributes and to heaven and hell, in his view, therefore needed to be interpreted allegorically.

References: Watt, W.M., *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973 and Oxford: Oneworld, 1998, Chapter Five; Caspar, R., *A Historical Introduction to Islamic Theology*, Rome: Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 1998, Chapter Six. (HPG)

Al-Juwayni, Imam al-Haramayn (AD 1028-1085)

An important thinker of the Ash'ari school of Islamic theology, who is also significant as the teacher of al-Ghazali. He was born in Nishapur in Iran, and after studying and teaching there he spent four years in Mecca and Medina, which was the origin of his honorific title 'Imam of the Two Holy Places. He was able to return to his hometown afterwards, however, and he taught there until his death. His works, especially *Kitab al-Irshad* (The Book of Guidance), demonstrate a somewhat greater openness to philosophy than was evident in the work of earlier Ash'ari theologians such as al-Baqillani, and a significant part of his legacy is the encouragement which he gave to his pupil al-Ghazali to study philosophy. In his political thought he adapted to the realities of power in his day, and gave more authority to the sultan (the *de facto* military ruler) than had been suggested by al-Mawardi.

References: Watt, W.M., *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 2nd ed., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985, Chapter Twelve; Lambton, A.K.S., *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, Chapter Seven; Walker, P.E., (ed.), *A Guide to Conclusive Proofs for the Principles of Belief*, Reading: Garnet, 2000. (HPG)

Al-Maturidi (c. AD 870-944)

The founding figure of one of the two great schools of thought in Islamic theology, the other being that of al-Ash'ari. Al-Maturidi was born in what is now Samarkand, in Uzbekistan, and it is in the eastern regions of the Islamic world that his school has been most influential, with the Ash'ari school being more dominant in the central and western regions. Generally speaking al-Maturidi's views adopt a position somewhere in between those of the Mu'tazila on the one hand and the followers of al-Ash'ari on the other so that, for example, al-Maturidi allows a greater possibility of human beings coming to a knowledge of God through the use of reason, even without revelation, and a greater element of human responsibility for human actions, even if in some respects they remain acts of God. His greater openness to the use of human reason has caused his views to be of considerable interest to modern Islamic thinkers who wish to emphasise the importance of human reason and responsibility but without running the risk of being accused of reviving the views of the Mu'tazila.

References: Watt, W.M., *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973 and Oxford: Oneworld, 1998, Chapter Ten; Caspar, R., *A Historical Introduction to Islamic Theology*, Rome: Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 1998, Chapter Eight; Williams, J.A., *The Word of Islam*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994, pp. 145-151. (HPG)

Al-Mawardi (AD 974-1058)

The greatest Sunni theoretician in the medieval period concerning how the question of how the Muslim community should be governed. He was born in Basra, and studied there and in Baghdad before becoming a *qadi* (judge) in Iran and then in Baghdad. Living as he did at a time of considerable unsettlement in the political life of the Muslim community, it is not surprising that he devoted much energy and thought to political questions, and in his major work in this field, *Kitab al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* (The Ordinances of Government) he insisted on the primacy of the caliph over the military rulers of the day, so that the legitimacy of the latter was dependent on the recognition of the former, even if effective military power lay with the latter.

References: Black, A., *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001, Chapter Seven; Rosenthal, E.I.J., *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958, pp. 27-37; Lambton, A.K.S., *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, Chapter Six; al-Mawardi, *The Ordinances of Islamic Government*, Reading: Garnet, 1996; Mikhail, H., *Politics and Revelation: Mawardi and After*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995. (HPG)

Mawdudi, Abu'l-A'la (AD 1904-1979)

One of the most important leaders of the Islamic Revival in the twentieth century. Mawdudi was born in Hyderabad in South India, and after a number of years of traditional Islamic education he was forced to withdraw from further formal study as a result of the death of his father. He continued to read widely, however, and during the 1920s he began to write broadly on a number of themes concerning Islam, including the Qur'an, and the position of Muslims within Indian society. In the 1930's he opposed the movement for the creation of Pakistan as a separate state for Muslims following independence from Britain, arguing that the new state would be based on nationalism rather than Islam. In 1941 he founded a movement to disseminate his ideas, the Jama'at-i Islami (literally 'Islamic Group'), with the idea that its members would serve as the vanguard for the transformation of the Islamic community through its adoption and proper practice of the ideology of Islam. In 1947, when the new state of Pakistan was created, Mawdudi elected to migrate to it, though branches of the Jama'at-i Islami were established in both India and Pakistan, and for the remaining years of his life Mawdudi sought to transform Pakistan into a truly Islamic state. He came to enjoy huge influence across the whole of the Islamic world as a result of his prolific writings, which were translated into Arabic and many other languages, and he has been described by S.V.R. Nasr as 'the foremost revivalist thinker of his time'. The view of Islamization which he represents, a kind of "Islam from above" is in sharp contrast, however, to that adopted by Muhammad Ilyas.

References: Nasr, S.V.R., *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996; idem., *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: the Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1994; Ahmad, K., and Ansari, Z.I., (eds.), *Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Mawlana Sayyid*

Abul A'la Mawdudi, Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1980; Mawdudi, A.A., *Islamic Law and Constitution*, Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1955. (HPG)

Al-Nazzam (?- AD 846)

One of the outstanding thinkers of the school of thought known as the Mu'tazila. He was born a slave in Basra but was freed and was educated there, including some time spent in the circle of his maternal uncle Abu'l-Hudhayl al-Allaf. He was summoned to Baghdad by the caliph al-Ma'mun around 818, and his views seem to have diverged from those of Abu'l-Hudhayl in that he made greater use of Greek philosophical reasoning. Only fragments of his works survive, but on the basis of these it is clear that he argued for the strict unity and utter transcendence of God; that God cannot do evil (so that as a result human beings must have free will); and that while the Qur'an is miraculous, the basis for this view is not its inimitability (*i'jaz*) but rather the predictions which it contains. He also composed some notable poetry, and was viewed with some suspicion by some of his contemporaries because of his love of wine and young boys.

References: Watt, W.M., *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973 and Oxford: Oneworld, 1998, Chapter Eight; Caspar, R., *A Historical Introduction to Islamic Theology*, Rome: Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 1998, Chapter Seven. (HPG)

Rida, Rashid (AD 1865-1935)

Born in Tripoli (now in Lebanon), Rida moved to Egypt after meeting Muhammad 'Abduh, and he then became 'Abduh's leading associate and biographer, helping in the production of the journal *Al-Manar* (The Lighthouse), with its new style of commentary on the Qur'an. After 'Abduh's death, however, and partly as a result of increased Western direct involvement in the affairs of the Middle East after the First World War, Rida's political views became more critical of the West, and his religious views, partly under the influence of the revived Wahhabi movement in Su'udi Arabia, became more conservative. He thus came to insist more vigorously that it was only the Islam of the first generation of Muslims, the *Salaf*, which was reliable and therefore an example for modern Muslims. He was particularly concerned about the abolition of the institution of the caliphate by the new Republican government of Kemal Ataturk in Turkey in 1924, and he organised an international conference in Cairo in 1926 to try to bring about its restoration, even if in a different form, but this came to nothing.

References: Badawi, M.A.Z., *The Reformers of Egypt*, London: Croom Helm, 1978, Chapter Three; Kerr, M.H., *Islamic Reform: the Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966; Shahin, E.E., *Through Muslim Eyes: M. Rashid Rida and the West*, Herndon (Virginia): International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993. (HPG)

Sayyid Ahmad Khan (AD 1817-1898)

The most important representative of Islamic reform in the Indian context in the nineteenth century. Born in the context of expanding British influence and rule in India, as a young man Ahmad Khan was employed by the British East India Company. In the aftermath of what the British called the Indian Mutiny in 1857, he attempted to articulate the best way forward for the Muslim community under direct British rule, and his recommendation was that, as a minority of the population, Muslims should seek to establish their loyalty to the British and seem to gain the maximum benefit from what British rule offered, particularly in the sphere of education. He therefore adopted Western dress and, in 1878, joined the Viceroy's Council for governing India. He established a number of organisations devoted to the translation and dissemination of Western texts for the improvement of Muslim education, among both men and women. He also, in 1875, opened the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, with English as the language of instruction and based on the model of a Cambridge college, as an avenue of advancement for young Muslims. His religious views were controversial as he challenged a number of traditional beliefs, suggesting that the only reliable source of guidance for Muslims was the Qur'an (i.e. not the Hadith as well), that the Qur'an needed careful historical interpretation in order to distinguish permanently valid principles from time-specific details, and that there were no essential clashes between Islamic and Western ideas because they both, with Judaism, had a common ancestry in Abraham, and each of the three had also had a deep engagement with the Greek tradition during the course of their history.

References: Baljon, J.M.S., *The Reforms and Religious Ideas of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, Leiden: Brill, 1949; Troll, C.W.. *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology*, Delhi: Vikas, 1978 and Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1979;

Malik, H., *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980. (HPG)

Sayyid Qutb (AD 1906-1966)

The most important intellectual ancestor of the radical wing of the modern Islamic revivalist movement. Qutb was born in Musha, a small village in Upper Egypt, from which he moved to Cairo to study, and during his time there he was heavily influenced by the liberal intellectual figures of the day, becoming very interested in English literature. In 1933 he became an employee of the Ministry of Education, and in 1948 he was sent by the Ministry to the United States in order to study Western methods of education. The three years he spent in the USA were a turning-point in his life, resulting in complete disillusionment with the West because of its sexual immorality and its uncritical support for the new state of Israel in the Middle East. When he returned to Egypt he therefore sought an alternative intellectual outlook, which he located in the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been founded in 1928 in order to make Egypt a more truly Islamic society. In addition some of the works of A.A. Mawdudi were translated into Arabic in 1951, and here Qutb found an understanding of Islam as an ideology, distinct from both capitalism and communism and in sharp opposition to Western materialism, which was deeply attractive. He therefore joined the Brotherhood. Shortly afterwards, however, relations between the government and the Brotherhood deteriorated sharply and Qutb was arrested. Maltreatment in prison heightened his sense of contrast between the ideals of Islam and the current situation in Egypt and when, in 1964, he was released and published *Signposts* (or *Milestones*) *on The Way*, in which he completely rejected all forms of government which did not correspond to what he believed to be the ideals of Islam and argued that they should be overthrown he was re-arrested and then, in 1966, executed. He is therefore the main ideologue of the revolutionary (as opposed to the gradualist) stream of the contemporary Islamic revival, and provides much of the theoretical underpinning for the views of Usama bin Laden.

He was also the author of a very influential commentary on the Qur'an, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'an).

References: Moussalli, A.S., *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: the Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb*, Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1992; Kepel, G., *The Prophet and Pharoah*, London: al-Saqi Books, 1985; Sivan, E., *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, 2nd ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990; Shepard, W.E., *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism*, Leiden: Brill, 1996. (HPG)

Shah Waliullah (AD 1702-1762)

Important Muslim reformer in India. After studying in Delhi Shah Waliullah spent some time in Mecca, which was an important meeting-place for Muslims from all corners of the world. When he returned to India he called for the reform of a number of areas of Islamic belief and practice, suggesting that of the traditional four sources of Islamic law only two, the Qur'an and the Hadith (Tradition) had on-going validity, and that these needed creative interpretation (*ijtihad*) in order to make their message applicable in the Indian context. He therefore translated the Qur'an into Persian, the cultured language of Indian Muslims, and his sons translated it into Urdu. He also suggested that the Hadith needed careful review, in order to clarify which sections were unreliable, this work thus serving as an early example of Hadith criticism. And he also argued that the different schools of Shari'a (Islamic Law) were no longer valid, and that what was needed was a return to the situation before their emergence, so that there could be one school for all Muslims.

References: Baljon, J.M.S., *Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi 1703-1762*, Leiden: Brill, 1986; Rizvi, S.A.A., *Shah Wali Allah and His Times: a Study of Eighteenth Century Islam, Politics and Society in India*, Canberra: Ma'rifat, 1980; Hermansen, M.K., (ed.), *The Conclusive Argument from God: Shah Wali Allah of Delhi's Hujjat Allah al-Baligha*, Leiden: Brill, 1996. (HPG)

Al-Shahrastani (AD 1086-1153)

Best known for his descriptions of the whole range of religious beliefs present in his day, both within and outside the Islamic community, on the strength of which his work was described by E.J. Sharpe as 'the first history of religion in world literature.' He was born in eastern Iran and studied in Nishapur. After going to Mecca on pilgrimage in 1116 he taught for three years in Baghdad before returning to eastern Iran. His theological views were basically Ash'ari, but he was readier than some of his predecessors in that school to take full account of the views of the philosophers, and even if he ultimately sought to refute their views he did so on the basis of the use of philosophical concepts and with considerable philosophical sophistication.

References: Watt, W.M., *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, 2nd ed., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985, Chapter Thirteen; Cureton, W., (ed.), *The Book of Religious and Philosophical Sects*, London: The London Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1842 and 1846; Lawrence, B.B., *Shahrastani on the Indian Religions*, The Hague: Mouton, 1976; Kazi, A.K., and Flynn, J.G., *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1984; Madelung, W., and Mayer, T., (eds.), *Struggling with the Philosopher: a Refutation of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2001. (HPG)

Sirhindi, Ahmad (AD 1564-1624)

Muslim reformer in the context of the Moghul Empire in India. Living as he did through the start of the second millennium of Islamic history, which fell in 1592, Sirhindi was extremely concerned about a number of threats to the Muslim community which he perceived as existing in India. These were, firstly, extreme Sufism, which he thought compromised the transcendence of God by suggesting that it was possible for Sufis to become united with God; secondly the new movement of Sikhism, which drew on elements of both the Hindu and the Islamic traditions; and thirdly the *din-i-ilahi* (literally 'religion of God'), espoused by the Moghul Emperor Akbar, which combined elements from the whole variety of religions then found in India. All of these things Sirhindi perceived to be threats to the purity of the Islamic faith and the identity of the Muslim community, and he therefore campaigned against them by all means available, including military ones against the Sikhs.

References: Friedmann, Y., *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi: an Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity*, Toronto: McGill University Press, 1971; Ansari, M.A.H., *Sufism and Shar 'ah: a Study of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Effort to Reform Sufism*, Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1986. (HPG)

Syed Ameer Ali (AD 1849-1928)

A significant reformer of Islamic thought in the Indian context. Following in the footsteps of Sayyid Ahmad Khan Ameer Ali sought to reformulate traditional Islamic teachings in order to make them both more easily applicable in the modern world and more easily understood and appreciated by non-Muslims. His most famous book *The Spirit of Islam*, and also his *A Short History of the Saracens* were both published in London, in English, and served a basically apologetic purpose, arguing that Islam was essentially a progressive force, for example with respect to the position of women in society, and that it was fundamentally sympathetic to reason.

References: Ahmad, A., *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1964*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, Chapter Four; Ali, A., *The Spirit of Islam*, London: Christophers, 1922. (HPG)

Wasil ibn 'Ata' (AD 699-748)

One of the leading early figures of the important school of Islamic theology, the Mu'tazila. He was born in Medina, and from there migrated to the Iraqi town of Basra, where he became a member of the circle of Hasan al-Basri, whose sermons addressed the whole range of aspects of piety, political, theological and spiritual. In his own thinking, Wasil subscribed to the view that God's attributes should be understood metaphorically rather than literally; that human beings have genuine free will; that a grave sinner was neither a believer nor an unbeliever (the so-called 'intermediate position' on this question); and that in the First Civil War in the Islamic community one of the protagonists was in the wrong, but Wasil refused to make a categorical statement concerning which one it was. These views were taken up and developed further by later members of the Mu'tazila.

References: Watt, W.M., *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973 and Oxford: Oneworld, 1998, Chapters Seven and Eight; Caspar, R., *A Historical Introduction to Islamic Theology*, Rome: Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, 1998, Chapter Seven. (HPG)

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